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EDUCATION WEEK

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Retire All Buses Built Before '77, U.S. Panel Urges

Safety Measure Targets 22% of School Vehicles

By Reagan Walker

WASHINGTON—Citing safety concerns, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended last week that school officials retire the more than one-fifth of the nation's school buses built before 1977.

The recommendation came as a result of a 10-month investigation of a Kentucky school-bus accident last spring that killed 27 people.

The transportation-safety board suggested that states order the phase-out of buses made before federal standards were tightened in 1977. If adopted nationally, the proposal would affect 77,000 school buses, about 22 percent of all those now in use.

The cost of replacing those buses, information supplied by states suggests, would total more than $2 billion.

State education officials said last week that older buses already are being retired in some states. But officials in many states said financial constraints have been the major roadblock to implementing a formal phase-out plan.

In New Jersey, for example, a 10-year retirement program begun in 1977 has taken all pre-standard buses off the roads.

But in California, nearly 45 percent of buses owned by public schools are pre-1977 buses, according to Ron Kinney, state supervisor of school transportation.

Mr. Kinney estimated that it would cost

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Larry Morris/The Washington Post

To kick off his education initiatives, President Bush met with groups of students last week—in one instance, over an impromptu bit of lunch at a Vienna, Va., high school.

Personnel Shortages Augur a 'Crisis' In Special Education, Groups Warn

By Debra Viadero

WASHINGTON—Serious shortages of special-education personnel constitute a "national emergency" that could jeopardize the education of handicapped children, six organizations in the field have warned in a report scheduled to be presented to the Congress this week.

"Over the coming years the shortages will reach crisis proportions," the coalition predicted.

The dearth of trained workers could force school officials to increase special-education class sizes, hire unqualified personnel, and scale down programs to fit the size of their workforce rather than the needs of children, the groups maintained.

"Unless this trend is reversed, there will be a major deterioration of both the availability and quality of special education for our nation's children with handicaps," the report states.

The report, "A Free Appropriate Education: But Who Will Provide It?," was to be formally presented April 3-4 in testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped and the House Subcommittee on Select Education.

Joining in the statement were the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the Council of Administrators of Special Education, the Council for Exceptional

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Tax Credits Are Too Expensive, Bush Asserts

Says All Should Help Pay for Public Schools

By Ann Bradley

WASHINGTON—President Bush, countering a longstanding Republican Party plank and an often-touted position of his predecessor, said last week that he does not favor tuition tax credits for people who send their children to private schools.

"We can't afford to do that," Mr. Bush said of government support for private-school parents. "It is the obligation of all taxpayers to support a public-education system. We want it to be the best."

The President made the remarks March 29 during a question-and-answer session with 75 high-school students visiting the White House. Asked by a private-school student whether his parents should receive a tax break because they also support public schools, Mr. Bush responded, "No, they shouldn't."

"I've been intrigued with the concept of tuition tax credits," the President continued. "And some say, well, should that include parochial schools? And I've said, yes, but the problem again is that we can't afford to do that."

"So I think that everybody should support the public-school system," he said. "And then, if on top of that, your parents think that they want to shell out, in addition to the tax money, tuition money, that's their right and that should be respected. But I don't think they should get

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Los Angeles Unveils 10-Yr. Reform Plan To Hike Attainment

By Lynn Olson

The Los Angeles Board of Education last week approved an ambitious 10-year plan aimed at combatting "widespread low-achievement patterns" in the nation's second-largest school district, particularly among poor and minority students.

The sweeping set of proposals, which would eventually cost more than $400 million a year, focuses primarily on the elementary grades and incorporates many of the education reforms that have become popular in recent years.

These include the creation of pre-kindergarten programs, smaller classes, more aggressive parental outreach, and a strengthened, language-rich curriculum geared toward the acquisition of higher-order skills.

The plan also calls for shifting more authority for educational spending and instruction down to the school site, through the creation of shared-decisionmaking

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Physician's Test Study Was 'Clearly Right,' A Federally Sponsored Analysis Has Found

By Robert Rothman

SAN FRANCISCO—A West Virginia physician was correct when he found that most students in all states scored above average on standardized achievement tests, a team of leading experts conducting a federally funded study reported here last week.

But the extent to which states and districts report above-average scores is not as great as the physician, John Jacob Cannell, suggested, the researchers said.

And they dismissed Dr. Cannell's contention that the high scores reflect a conspiracy among test publishers and administrators to mislead the public. Rather, they said, the scores result from outdated norms and efforts to "teach to the test."

Responding to the findings, Dr. Cannell—who is currently studying psychiatry in Albuquerque—said he felt "vindicated."

"I feel my main points have been corroborated," he said.

Daniel Koretz, senior social scientist at the RAND Corporation, said the new study "removes one of the irritating irrelevancies around the previous study, [namely] the ad hominem arguments against Cannell's lack of background."

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Also in the news

Approval, With Dissent, in Chelsea
The school committee assented to the Boston University management plan, amid new objections.
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Catholic Educators' Hopeful Signs
At their convention, they were buoyed by good news of pupil performance and an enrollment surge.
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Julie A. Miller/Education Week

ON THE ROAD: Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos meets with students at a B.I.A. school in California. See story on page 12.

IN SUMMARY

Kansas City Reform
District and union officials in Kansas City, Mo., have proposed a major restructuring effort, but its fate may rest on whether a federal judge orders the state to pay its estimated $100-million cost. **Page 5.**

Catholic Schools on the Upbeat
Catholic educators, meeting last week in Chicago, saw reason for optimism in a study showing that their students perform better than those in public schools on math and science tests. **Page 6.**

Lap-Top Experiments
School pilot tests are showing promising prospects for a technological tool that until recently has been largely ignored by public schools—portable "lap-top" computers. **Page 7.**

Florida PREP's Anniversary
State officials and educators are pondering the effects of their groundbreaking effort, now 10 years old, to provide children in early grades with more individualized attention. **Page 8.**

Gym-Class Debate
Facing strong opposition, Commissioner of Education Saul Cooperman of New Jersey is looking to compromise on his plan to eliminate high-school gym requirements. **Page 8.**

Hawkeye Finance
The Iowa legislature's efforts to work out a new formula for distributing $1 billion in state school aid could be derailed by a proposal to let districts levy a special property tax without voter approval. **Page 10.**

Civil Rights and Football
The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments last week in the case of a white football coach in Dallas who was removed from his job at the urging of his high school's black principal. **Page 14.**

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ACROSS THE NATION

STATES

Student 'Bill of Rights' Adopted by New York Regents

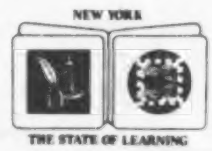
The New York State Board of Regents has adopted a student "bill of rights" that seeks to emphasize the "human side of education," according to Thomas Sobol, the state superintendent.

The 10-item document was proposed to the board last September and revised after a series of public hearings.

The statement makes clear that it does not establish any new legal entitlements for students, but is intended to reflect the board's "policy goals."

The manifesto proclaims that each child has the right to:

- A healthy, secure, nurturing infancy and early childhood;
- Healthy intellectual, emotional, physical, and moral development;



- A free, sound, basic education that is appropriate to individual needs and respects culture, race, socioeconomic background, and language.
- Effective schools and educational programs;
- Assistance in preparing for jobs, college, family life, and citizenship;
- Education without fear;
- Resources needed to secure their educational rights; and
- An education that involves responsibilities as well as rights.

One item proposed last year was not included in the final document. It would have established students' right to attend school "in buildings that are clean, safe, and in good repair."

■ **The Georgia Board of Education has banned spring football practice,** on the grounds that students were dropping other sports and slighting their studies in order to participate.

Although some board members said spring practice should be kept, but strictly regulated, a majority agreed with educators' arguments that the workouts forced many high-school students to quit playing baseball and postpone studying for final exams.

DISTRICTS

Bribery Charges Spur Suspension Of New York Community Board

Schools Chancellor Richard R. Green of New York City has suspended a community school board after two members were indicted on bribery charges related to their duties in office.

The action against Community School Board 12 became necessary because the indictments "have seriously undermined the credibility and respectability of the board and the stability of the district," the chancellor said in a statement last week.

The suspension is the second imposed by Mr. Green since last fall, when allegations of bribery and corruption against community-school-board members erupted into a full-blown scandal. He moved against the board of Community District 9 in November, and investigations of possibly illegal activities in a number of other districts within the city school system are currently under way.

The two districts affected by Mr. Green's actions, and a third suspended by his predecessor, are being run by trustees until new boards are elected. Community-board elections, scheduled for May 2, are the first to be conducted under a conflict-of-interest law enacted by the legislature last year.

■ **Principals in Cleveland will receive higher salaries—and be held more accountable for student performance**—under a plan approved by the school board.

High-school principals now earning from $54,180 to $68,141 will earn from $63,720 to $72,920, the board decided last month.

Intermediate-school principals will earn from $55,720 to $64,020 and elementary-school principals will make from $52,317 to $60,315 under the plan, which will take effect in the next school year.

In order to advance under the new system, principals will have to demonstrate an "ability to perform and produce measurable results," said Timothy O. Giles, the district's chief of supportive services.

The board last summer approved an evaluation system designed to assess principals' performance based on such criteria as students' test scores, attendance, dropout rates, and enrollment in extracurricular activities.

■ **More than 20 percent of high-school principals in Chicago have retired since the beginning of the school year,** Bruce Berndt, president of the Chicago Principals' Association, said last week.

Elementary- and middle-school principals also have retired in greater numbers than in previous years, he noted.

Mr. Berndt suggested that the retirements may have been hastened by a school-reform law that abolishes tenure, allows local councils to hire and fire principals, and calls for performance-based contracts for principals starting in 1990.

Some principals "didn't feel like fighting the upcoming school-reform changes in principal selection," he said.

■ **The Suwannee County, Fla., school system has "a hostile racial environment" resulting in discrimination against blacks,** a group of black teachers and students has charged in a federal suit.

The group alleges that black teachers have been fired for racial reasons and have not been permitted to teach college-preparatory classes.

Black students have been disciplined more harshly than white students and subjected to racial slurs from teachers, the suit also alleges.

School officials have denied all the charges, Victor Afracano, a lawyer for the northern Florida district, said last week.

In Denver, meanwhile, several black teachers and the local N.A.A.C.P. are arguing with school officials over a district plan to improve the quality of the teaching force.

The group charges that the plan discriminates against black teachers and is being misused as a disciplinary device.

■ **A proposal to raze the landmark Beverly Hills (Calif.) High School and lease its land to developers faces**

A Flight of Fancy

Five students at the Ashe County Career Center in Jefferson, N.C., are preparing themselves to experience the cramped conditions, exhausting schedules, bland diets—and, perhaps, some of the almost unimaginable exhilaration—of flying on the space shuttle.

The high-school students plan to use computers, inventive gadgetry, and their imaginations to conduct a simulation of the flight of the shuttle Atlantis, which is scheduled to be launched April 28.

As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration begins its countdown to lift off, "mission control" at the school will do the same for its shuttle Victoria—a windowless classroom.

At blast off, computer software in the classroom will simulate the shuttle's launch and "roll maneuvers." Then, for the next five days, the student astronauts will eat, sleep, conduct experiments, and launch a satellite just as the crew of the Atlantis will do.

And when the time comes to release the satellite and "space walk," the students will approximate the sensation of weightlessness by suspending themselves in harnesses hanging from the ceiling.

The classroom "shuttle" has been modified to resemble the Atlantis, with its two floors, cabin, and payload bay, according to Robert Calhoun, a

Peter Steiner

media-communications teacher at the center and the originator of the project.

The crew of the Victoria will be in constant electronic communication with "mission control." And, through the "Space Link" telecommunications system, students will be able to follow the status of the real shuttle and every detail of the astronauts' activities.

Basically, said Mr. Calhoun, "we'll be able to monitor the astronauts 24 hours a day."

—J.W.

strong community opposition.

A school-board panel suggested in February that the financially strapped Beverly Hills school district could make money by leasing to commercial developers such "surplus land" as parking lots, athletic fields, and the tract that contains the district offices.

The committee also urged officials to "seriously consider" demolishing the 60-year-old high school—whose alumni include a number of entertainment-industry figures—and leasing 8 acres of its 27-acre campus to a developer.

Members argued that income from development on the tract would allow construction of a new, "state-of-the-art" high school on the remaining 19 acres.

But Mayor Robert K. Tanenbaum has led a chorus of public protest, calling the committee's suggestion "the most repugnant proposal I have ever witnessed in government."

Public hearings will have to be held on the plans, which are contingent on zoning changes, according to Hali Wickner, a spokesman for the district.

■ **The Cincinnati school system underreports the size and cost of its bureaucracy by failing to count teachers who perform out-of-classroom tasks for at least part of the day,** the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers has charged.

Although 55 teachers in the district spend all or part of their day acting as administrators, the cost of the tasks they perform is not considered administrative, according to a new report by the union. As a result, it says, the district's statistics underestimate bureaucratic costs by nearly 30 percent.

But Lynn Goodwin, the district's deputy superintendent and treasurer, said such teachers should not be counted as administrators. "I don't know of any school in which all teachers teach all day," he added.

■ **A gospel-choir course at a Cleveland-area high school will be eliminated because of concerns that it violates the First Amendment's prohibition on state establishment of religion.**

The decision by officials of Cleveland Heights High School to discontinue the course, which had been taught for four years, drew complaints from many students and parents at a school-board meeting last month.

The school has offered to create an African-American music class next fall that would include gospel music. And students could continue the choir as an after-school club, Robert Greene, the district's director of community relations, said last week.

■ **The presence of a rare type of plant has blocked use of a proposed site for a badly needed elementary school in Orange County, Fla.**

Engineers were surveying the site when they discovered about 35 specimens of scrub lupine, one of about 120 Florida plant species to be declared endangered, according to Lee Ann Lowery, real-property manager for the Orange County school system.

Faced with overcrowding at a nearby elementary school and unable to afford other land in the Orlando area, district officials considered trying to build around the plants. They finally abandoned the site last week, however.

■ **Vandals have caused an estimated $1.1 million in damages to a Minnesota high school.**

Henry Sibley Senior High School in Mendota Heights will be closed for the rest of the school year because of damage allegedly inflicted March 23 by four students, district officials said.

The students used a hand-operated fork lift to smash through doors and walls, burned a vending machine with an acetylene torch, and splashed paint throughout the school, according to Dennis Delmont, chief of police in the St. Paul suburb.

Most of the repair costs will be to remove asbestos insulation that was damaged when the vandals turned on three fire hydrants, officials said.

The students have been charged with first-degree criminal damage to property, third-degree burglary, and theft.

■ **The San Francisco Unified School District's support for a United Farm Workers grape boycott is illegal,** growers have charged in court.

David J. Pinkham, owner of a Central Valley vineyard, and the California Grape Commission allege in a lawsuit that the school board abused its powers and issued "an unveiled, purely political endorsement" when it approved a resolution forbidding the district from purchasing grapes or other food "contaminated with pesticides."

Thomas J. Sammon, executive assistant to Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines, said last month that the resolution is legal because it concerns the safety of students.

■ **About 50,000 Philadelphia children between the ages of 6 and 12 are "alone and unsupervised" from the time school ends until their parents return from work,** according to a recent study.

The Philadelphia School Age Child Care Coalition noted that the city has space for only about 2,000 children in after-school programs operated by schools, the recreation department, community organizations, churches, and day-care providers.

The coalition urged the city to recognize "latchkey" children as a top priority.

DIMENSIONS

School Wage Settlements

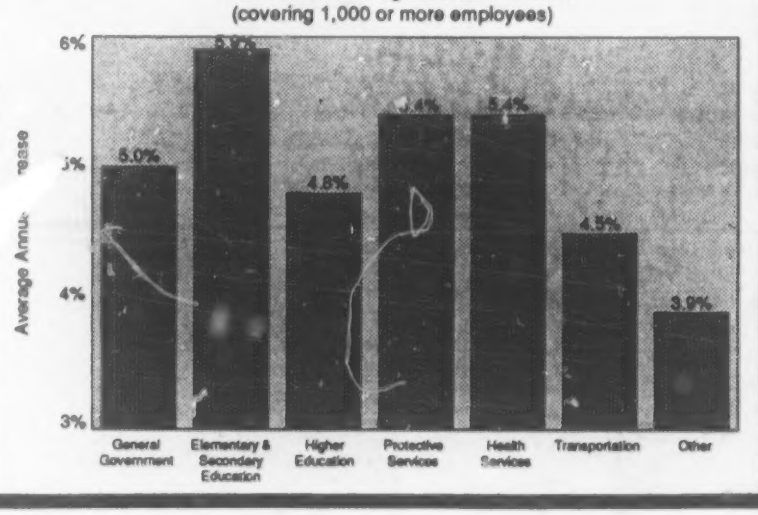
Elementary- and secondary-school employees fared better than other state and local government workers in 1988 collective-bargaining agreements, according to a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report.

The 344,000 teachers and other public-school workers covered by major wage settlements last year received an average raise of 5.6 percent in the first year, and 5.9 percent a year over the life of their contracts. The average increase for all state- and local-government wage agreements covering more than 1,000 workers was 5.1 percent in the first year and 5.3 percent over the life of the contract.

The only group to surpass elementary and secondary educators was health-service workers, who received an average 6.2 percent raise in their contracts' first year. Over the life of the contracts, however, the health-service workers' annual raises were pegged well below those of school employees.

Copies of "State and Local Government Collective Bargaining Settlements in 1988" (USDL 89-97) are available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20212.

State and Local Wage Settlements 1988
(covering 1,000 or more employees)



RESEARCH AND REPORTS

Child-Health Institute To Study Impact of Day Care on Infants

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development is launching what officials of the federal agency term the most comprehensive study to date of the impact of day care on infants.

The five-year study will examine the emotional, cognitive, and social development of about 1,200 infants being cared for by adults other than their parents in a variety of day-care settings.

The study will follow children's development during their first three and a half years. It will involve infants representing a cross-section of geographic locations and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Growing numbers of mothers of young infants are entering the labor force, noted Sarah Friedman, a health-science administrator at the institute.

The study will explore "whether this has an impact on child development and what the specifics of the impact are," she explained.

The project is the most ambitious attempt so far to draw together data from a variety of day-care settings and study a wide range of characteristics of nonparental care, according to Ms. Friedman.

■ **Efforts by nine school districts to place more authority in the hands of teachers and principals** are profiled in a new National Governors' Association report.

"Restructuring in Progress: Lessons from Pioneering Districts" was researched with the assistance of the Center for Policy Research in Education and written by Jane L. David, director of the Bay Area Research Group in Palo Alto, Calif.

It focuses on four districts—Jefferson County, Ky.; Dade County, Fla.; Poway, Calif; and New Orleans—that have undertaken substantial efforts to reorganize the way they do business in order to improve teaching and learning.

Some of the changes include reorganizing middle schools into "mini-schools" of roughly 150 students each; providing schools with a lump-sum budget, to spend as they see fit; and creating new governance structures at the school site.

The report also analyzes common problems in approaching structural change and how districts have overcome such barriers.

Copies of the report are available for $7.50 each, prepaid, from N.G.A. Publications, 444 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 250, Washington, D.C. 20001.

■ **Teachers in six Southern states earn an average of $10,000 a year less than other college graduates in the region,** according to an annual survey by the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory.

Despite gains in recent years, the study noted, the typical Southern teacher's $24,572 annual pay was far behind the $34,455 earned by other graduates.

Copies of "An Analysis of the Comparability of Teacher Salaries to the Earnings of Other College Graduates in the Southeast: 1988 Update" are available for $12.00 each from the Southeastern Education Improvement Laboratory, P.O. Box 12748, 200 Park, Suite 200, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709-2748.

PEOPLE

■ U.S. Surgeon General **C. Everett Koop** has been awarded the 1988 "Jefferson Medal" by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.

The medal, named for Thomas Jefferson, is given each year to a college graduate who has made "extraordinary contributions to American society."

Dr. Koop, a pediatric surgeon who was surgeon-in-chief of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and professor of pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania before he was named surgeon general in 1981, is being honored for his achievements both as a physician and a public official.

Gary Quehl, president of CASE, is scheduled to present the award at a Washington ceremony next week.

■ Officials of the Jefferson County school district, Colorado's largest, have hired a former state education commissioner to help them overcome a public-image problem.

Calvin Frazier, who retired as commissioner in 1987 and is now an educational consultant at the University of Denver, will receive $37.50 an hour for polling legislators and community leaders in the suburban-Denver area to find out their impressions of the district's schools.

The district has been beset in recent months by bitter contract negotiations and a reduced budget. Teachers have called for the replacement of Superintendent John Peper, and a recent survey of P.T.A. members found widespread dissatisfaction with the superintendent and the school board.

"The board acknowledges that there are a number of underlying problems that need to be addressed," said Kay Pride, a spokesman for the district.

Mr. Frazier was to report directly to the superintendent, Ms. Pride said.